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Media Release

Released 21/01/2021

Source: [Labour Force, Australia, December 2020](#)

Seasonally adjusted employment increased by 50,000 people between November and December 2020 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The number of employed people in Australia was 88,000 lower in December compared to March, but was 784,000 higher than May.

Employment and hours worked

Bjorn Jarvis, head of labour statistics at the ABS, said this latest data showed that the broad recovery in the labour market had continued through to the end of the year.

"Employment finished the year 0.7 per cent below the March level, having fallen 6.7 per cent, or 872,000 people, between March and May.

"Although employment has recovered 90 per cent of the fall from March to May, the recovery in part-time employment has outpaced full-time employment. While part-time employment was higher than March, full-time employment was 1.3 per cent below March.

"The recovery in hours worked has been slower than the recovery in employment."

Unemployment and participation

Seasonally adjusted unemployment decreased in December by 30,000 people. The unemployment rate decreased 0.2 percentage points to 6.6 per cent.

The participation rate, which represents the labour force as a proportion of the civilian population aged 15 years and over, rose by a further 0.1 percentage points to a new high of 66.2 per cent.

"The rise in the participation rate reflects a net increase of around 20,000 people in the

labour force in December. There were 108,000 more people in the labour force than in March – 196,000 more unemployed people and 88,000 fewer employed people,” Mr Jarvis said.

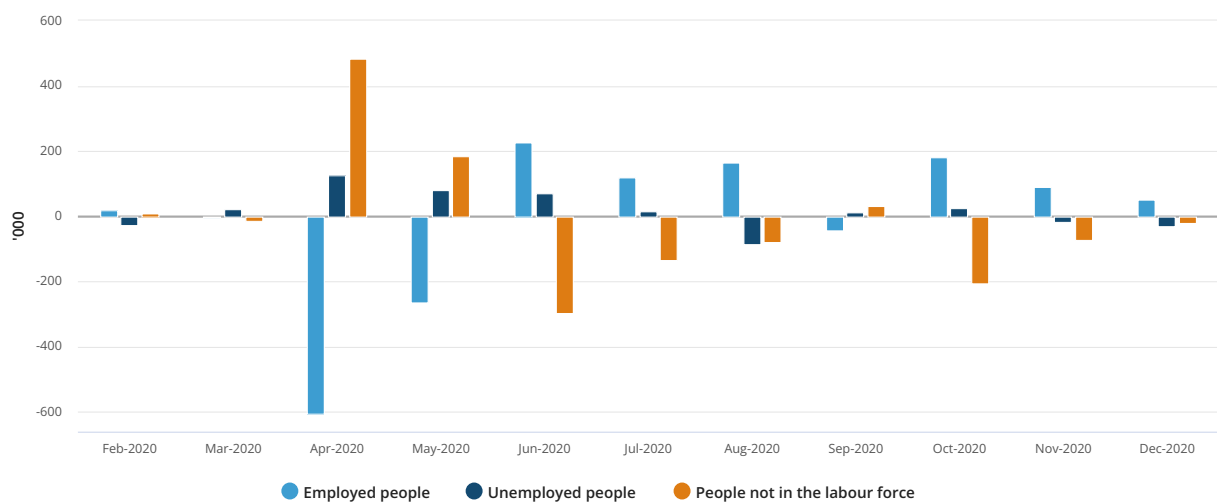
The youth unemployment rate dropped 1.7 percentage points to 13.9 per cent in December, and the youth participation rate fell 1.1 percentage points to 68.6 per cent.

Underutilisation

The underemployment rate fell a further 0.8 percentage points in December to 8.5 per cent, 5.2 percentage points below its recent peak in April and 0.3 percentage points below March.

The underutilisation rate, which combines the unemployment and underemployment rates, fell 1.1 percentage points to 15.1 per cent, 5.0 percentage points below its peak in May.

Monthly changes in key labour populations, Australia



Today's release includes [additional analysis of hours worked \(/articles/insights-hours-](/articles/insights-hours-)

[worked-december-2020](#)), including for those people working zero hours, analysis of employment and hours for the states and territories. It also includes [additional analysis of underemployment](#) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/underemployment-reduced-hours-or-prefers-more-hours>).

More details are in the December 2020 issue of [Labour Force, Australia](#) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/dec-2020>). Further information, including regional labour market information, will be available in the upcoming December 2020 issue of [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#) (</statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release>), due for release on Thursday 28 January 2021.

The ABS would like to thank Australians for their continued support in responding to our surveys during such a difficult time.

Media notes

- People in the Labour Force are either employed, or unemployed. In order to be unemployed, people must be actively looking for work, and available to start work during the reference week.
- The 'youth' age group refers to 15-24 year olds.
- The numbers in the media release are rounded to the nearest thousand people. For more detailed numbers see the data downloads section in the [Labour Force, Australia](#) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release>) publication.
- The ABS has suspended publishing trend series for the COVID-19 period.
- Further information on additional labour market statistics can be found in '[Measuring the labour market impacts of COVID-19](#)' (<https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/Measuring%20Labour%20Market%20COVID19>); part of the suite of information available on the ABS website.
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